

'UFO' sparks 3-hour Imphal airspace closure

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 20 November, 2023



New Delhi: Imphal's Bir Tikendrajit International Airport was ordered to shut flight operations after unidentified unmanned aerial vehicles/drones were detected in the airspace.

The aerial vehicles have been detected in the zone since 2:30 pm on Sunday, sources told India Today. Services normalised after around over three hours.

While a few flights were cancelled to and from Imphal, other incoming flights turned back from Imphal airspace and diverted to alternative destinations, as per sources.

On the suspension of flight operations, Imphal International Airport Director Chipemmi Keishing issued a statement saying, "Due to the sighting of an unidentified flying object within Imphal controlled Airspace, two flights have been diverted and three departing flights

have been delayed. Flight operations commence after receipt of clearance from a competent authority".

An official of the Air Traffic Control (ATC) said they received a message from the CISF at 2.30 pm, informing them that a UFO (unidentified flying object) was found near the airport.

"The UFO was visible with bare eyes moving westwards of the airfield till 4 pm," the official said.

The Indian Air Force Eastern Command at Shillong was informed of the development, the official said.

The arrival of an IndiGo flight from Kolkata to Imphal was instructed to hold overhead till clearance was taken from security agencies, CISF and SP Imphal West. Three aircraft were awaiting instructions and waited for over three hours while two inbound flights were diverted to Kolkatta after the air traffic controllers reported an unidentified flying object near the runway.

An IndiGo flight No. 6E5118 (from Delhi to Imphal) was diverted to Kolkata, and another IndiGo flight No. 6E275 (from Kolkata to Imphal) was diverted to Guwahati. Meanwhile, after being delayed for over three hours, Air India flight No. AI 890 was allowed to take off from Imphal for Guwahati.

According to the technical staff at the airport and air traffic control, members saw the drones around 2:30 pm, following which, the three flights were asked to halt take off. As a result of the drone sightings and subsequent cancellation and delay, some passengers said they've rescheduled their tickets.

Taking to X, formerly Twitter, Eastern Air Command of the Air Force said, "IAF activated its Air Defence response mechanism based on visual inputs from Imphal airport. The small object was not seen thereafter."

-B